

Message Text

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ACTION EA-13

INFO OCT-01 SS-14 ISO-00 CIAE-00 INR-10 NSAE-00 RSC-01

NSC-07 NSCE-00 PRS-01 DODE-00 PM-03 DPW-01 IO-03

SPC-01 DRC-01 /056 W

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P R 250930Z MAR 74

FM AMEMBASSY SEOUL

TO SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 3019

INFO AMEMBASSY TOKYO

CINCPAC

S E C R E T SEOUL 1903

LIMDIS

E.O. 11652: GDS

TAGS: PFOR, PDEV, KS, KN

SUBJ: POSSIBLE NORTH KOREAN INITIATIVE IN SOUTH-NORTH DIALOGUE

1. SENIOR KNRC RED CROSS OFFICIALS HAVE TOLD US THAT NORTH KOREAN SIDE HAS GIVEN FURTHER SIGNALS RE SOFTENING OF POSITION ON RESUMPTION OF DIALOGUE.

2. KNRC CHIEF NEGOTIATOR LEE BOM SOK TOLD POL COUNSELOR THAT NORTH KOREAN HANDLING OF MODALITIES RE UPCOMING MARCH 27 SNCC DEPUTY CO-CHAIRMEN'S MEETING AND APRIL 3 RED CROSS DELEGATES SESSION VARIED SIGNIFICANTLY FROM PAST. ACCORDINGLY NORTH KOREAN USED HOT LINE TELEPHONE MARCH 21 TO CONVEY MESSAGE THAT IN VIEW URGENCY OF NORMALIZING SNCC, IT WISHED TO CONFIRM THAT ROK SIDE WOULD ACCEPT MARCH 27 MEETING PROPOSED BY NORTH. IN PARALLEL FASHION, KNRC RECEIVED MESSAGE MARCH 22 FROM NORTH KOREAN RED CROSS NOTING URGENCY OF NEED TO NORMALIZE RED CROSS CONFERENCE AND PROPOSING APRIL 3 FOR DELEGATES MEETING (AT LAST DELEGATES MEETING NORTH HAD ORIGINALLY PROPOSED APRIL 11 WITH SOUTH COUNTER-PROPOSING LATE MARCH).

3. LEE SAID THAT IN PAST WHEN PROPOSING OR ACCEPTING MEETING DATE NORTH WOULD ALWAYS STATE FOR RECORD THAT PURPOSE WAS TO DISCUSS

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NORTHERN PROPOSALS OR CONDITIONS. IN BOTH PHONE CALLS REPORTED

ABOVE THERE WAS NO MENTION OF PREVIOUS CONDITIONS AND PROPOSALS PUT ON TABLE BY NORTH. AS A CONSEQUENCE, LEE SAID THAT ROKG BELIEVES THERE POSSIBILITY NORTH KOREANS MAY TAKE SOME FURTHER STEPS TOWARDS SOFTENING THEIR POSITION AND RESUMING DIALOGUE. LEE SAID IT IS POSSIBLE THAT AT MARCH 27 MEETING NORTH KOREANS MAY IN FACT PROPOSE RESUMPTION OF SNCC PERHAPS SUGGESTING PANMUNJOM AS THE SITE. HOWEVER, HE SAID MORE LIKELY DEVELOPMENT WOULD BE FURTHER SOFTENING OF NORTH KOREAN POSITION WHILE STILL RETAINING SOME AMBIGUOUS LINK BETWEEN SNCC RESUMPTION AND NORTH'S PROPOSAL FOR POLITICAL CONFERENCE.

4. LEE SAID IT WAS HIS IMPRESSION THAT SNCC DEPUTY CHANG KI-YONG WILL BE INSTRUCTED TO CONTINUE FIRM LINE AT MARCH 27 MEETING. IF NORTH KOREANS DO PERSIST IN TRYING TO LINK SNCC RESUMPTION IN ANY FASHION TO THEIR POLITICAL CONFERENCE PROPOSAL, CHANG WILL PROBABLY REITERATE ROK POSITION THAT SNCC SHOULD RESUME FIRST AND THAT POLITICAL CONFERENCE PROPOSAL COULD BE AN AGENDA MATTER FOR SNCC DISCUSSION. IF NORTH KOREANS SHOULD PROPOSE UNCONDITIONAL RESUMPTION OF SNCC LEE SAID ROKG WOULD PROBABLY HAVE QUOTE NO CHOICE UNQUOTE BUT TO ACCEPT PROPOSAL.

5. LEE INDICATED THAT FINAL DECISION ON HOW TO HANDLE NORTH KOREANS AT RED CROSS DELEGATES MEETING WILL BE DEFERRED UNTIL ROK SIDE SEES WHAT HAPPENS AT SNCC CO-CHAIRMEN'S MEETING ON MARCH 27. PRIMIN KIM HAD ORIGINALLY INSISTED THAT ROK RED CROSS DELEGATES TAKE HARD LINE LIMITING THEMSELVES TO CONTINUING ATTACKS ON NORTH OVER FEBRUARY 15 FISHING BOAT INCIDENT. HOWEVER, PRESIDENT PARK HAS INDICATED THAT HE IS PREPARED TO AUTHORIZE ROK RED CROSS DELEGATES TO PRIVATELY SIGNAL TO NORTH THAT ROK SIDE WOULD BE PREPARED TO NEGOTIATE RESUMPTION OF RED CROSS CONFERENCE WITH PANMUNJOM AS VENUE.

6. IN SEPARATE CONVERSATION WITH EMBOFF, RED CROSS CHIEF SPOKESMAN SAID THAT NORTH KOREANS HAD INFORMALLY INDICATED TO ROK SIDE THAT THEY HOPEFUL MARCH 27 SNCC DEPUTY CO-CHAIRMEN'S MEETING WILL BE FINAL MEETING BEFORE NORMALIZATION OF SNCC.

7. COMMENT: IN DISCUSSION REPORTED ABOVE, LEE GAVE CLEAR IMPRESSION THAT ROKG EXPECTING SOME SIGNIFICANT NORTH KOREAN GESTURE TOWARDS SOFTENING OF ITS POSITION AT UPCOMING SOUTH-NORTH SNCC AND RED
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CROSS WORKING MEETINGS.

8. DISCUSSION WITH LEE WAS BEFORE NORTH KOREAN QUOTE PEACE AGREEMENT UNQUOTE PROPOSAL AND NORTH KOREAN POSTPONEMENT OF MAC MEETING (SEPTELS). HOWEVER, IT MAY BE NORTH KOREANS DO HAVE SOME BROADER TACTICAL CHANGES IN MIND.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 JAN 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: TERRITORIAL UNIFICATION, COMMITTEE MEETINGS, NEGOTIATIONS, MEETING DELEGATIONS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 25 MAR 1974
Decaption Date: 28 MAY 2004
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Authority: GolinoFR
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 28 MAY 2004
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1974SEOUL01903
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Film Number: D740064-0504
From: SEOUL
Handling Restrictions: n/a
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1974/newtext/t19740317/aaaaaqcb.tel
Line Count: 114
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Office: ACTION EA
Original Classification: SECRET
Original Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 3
Previous Channel Indicators:
Previous Classification: SECRET
Previous Handling Restrictions: LIMDIS
Reference: n/a
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Authority: GolinoFR
Review Comment: n/a
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 30 JUL 2002
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review History: RELEASED <30 JUL 2002 by elyme>; APPROVED <04 FEB 2003 by GolinoFR>
Review Markings:

Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
30 JUN 2005

Review Media Identifier:
Review Referrals: n/a
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: POSSIBLE NORTH KOREAN INITIATIVE IN SOUTH-NORTH DIALOGUE
TAGS: PFOR, PDEV, KS, KN, SNCC
To: STATE
Type: TE
Markings: Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 30 JUN 2005